

Team leader calls the tune

by Charles Mak



Calvin Cheuk (right), training manager, regional operation
Benny Yuen, team leader, outbound insurance programme
PCCW Teleservices (Hong Kong) Limited
Photo: Wallace Chan

Any suggestion of a decline in Hong Kong's call centre business would be a misconception. In fact, the fast-track career progression demonstrated by Benny Yuen, team leader, outbound insurance programme, PCCW Teleservices (Hong Kong) Limited, is testimony to the sector's continuous growth.

Mr Yuen joined PCCW Teleservices (Hong Kong) Limited, a subsidiary of PCCW Limited, immediately after leaving school in 2001. "I was interested in telecommunications and the company enjoyed such a reputation which gave me confidence," he recalls. "When I signed up, I wasn't thinking long term but soon enough I realised the scope for growth both professionally and personally."

Since then his involvement in a smorgasbord of business programmes has exposed him to service areas as diverse as banking and finance, government, tourism and public utilities. An impressive track record in response rates and sales volume plus a

genuine passion for the job led to greater opportunities. Now leading his own team, Mr Yuen's responsibilities include directly reporting to senior managers, staff arrangement and meetings with clients on a regular basis. His typical day comprises tasks such as sales performance reviews, call monitoring and staff briefing and coaching, as well as quality assurance and project planning.

As a leader, Mr Yuen believes the ability to multitask is essential for effective professional development and he thanks PCCW Teleservices for the coaching he has received.

"The comprehensive range of company training has helped me develop an all-round skill set," he remarks. New recruits undergo a two-week familiarisation programme plus an array of basic training in products and customer service. Besides ongoing training, Mr Yuen points out that stepping-up managers like himself also benefit from a broad spectrum of learning and development programmes as their responsibilities increase.

Both ends of the line

During a normal shift, an inbound call operator may receive around 200 calls while an outbound one makes 300 to 400. Average talk time amounts to 80 per cent of the duty hours.

"Be prepared at all times"

"In this result-oriented business, we aim to create all-win situations," Mr Yuen stresses, adding that at times, meeting sales targets is akin to making the impossible possible. However, accomplishments bring enormous satisfaction to all stakeholders especially members of the team.

Calvin Cheuk, PCCW Teleservices' training manager for regional operation remarks: "Our operators must be prepared at all times because customers demand a great deal from us. This is even more so for inbound calls (customer enquiry hotlines) because customers usually expect an instant answer to their enquiries," he says. "The outbound operation, on the other hand, is more sales-oriented and so we must keep abreast of social change, customer habits and product trends."

Clear and achievable career goals are as vital as any skills and knowledge training, Mr Cheuk emphasises.

This philosophy is aligned with the company's "promote from within" policy and is reflected in the company's training guide, which aims at helping staff pave their development either vertically or horizontally. "We are leader of the field and our staff enjoy the privilege of industry exposure by working in various sales programmes," he adds.

Quality rules

This February, PCCW Teleservices celebrates its 10th anniversary. Plans for internal and external events such as celebrations and award presentation ceremonies are well underway. These activities will involve regional office staff in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Taiwan, as well as the company's business partners.

"Unlike primitive telemarketing functions like ticketing, which has been eliminated partly due to the rise of the internet, our business is constantly expanding and we celebrate that," Mr Cheuk enthuses. "In fact, we have more than 3,000 staff across the region and the number is growing."

In addition to boosting business results, he emphasises that the industry now focuses on improving service quality and professionalism. "We have been given a higher status in the marketplace because we proactively enhance our capabilities," he adds. "For example, all our insurance sales staff have the required qualifications and licences."

In 2007, some 16 awards were bestowed on PCCW Teleservices for its outstanding (individual and team) performance, strategic business infrastructure and well-established training systems. "These accolades, including the grand awards from the Hong Kong Call Centre Association, highlight our individual members' strengths as well as our esprit de corps," Mr Cheuk says. "Such achievements help create a rewarding work environment for all of us."

As far as quality is concerned, candidates hoping to join the company are expected to show confidence, dedication and perseverance, while demonstrating the willingness to learn and exhibiting clear aspirations to get ahead.

China Opportunities



A few years ago, PCCW Teleservices extended its reach to major mainland cities like Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. Mr Cheuk notes that today there are ample opportunities for high-performing Hong Kong professionals to take up management positions over the border. "In spite of plans for localisation, we still need to tip the balance between Hong Kong and the mainland and leverage on each other's niche skills and strengths for further expansion," he

says. "For instance, Hong Kong staff who helped launch our Guangzhou centre have since been given greater responsibilities even though the prospects for promotion were not made explicit then. This demonstrates the significance for staff taking the initiative and being master of their own career development."

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